
Lawmakers look to legalize human embryonic stem cell research

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For now, the NIH is again able to fund research projects using human embryonic stem cells. However, if there's anything to be learned from the past few weeks, it's that the funding is uncertain. The only way to ensure continuous support at the federal level would be legislation specifically legalizing research using those cells.

Reps Diana DeGette, D-Colo., and Mike Castle, R-Del, have introduced legislation to legalize research using human embryonic stem cells. In the senate, Sen. Arlen Specter, D-Penn, has introduced similar legislation as has Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa. Harkin is holding a hearing on Thursday before the Appropriations subcommittee on health, which he heads.

According to an AP story:

“ "There is great uncertainty in the research community as to what will happen," Specter said, explaining the need to pass a law confirming the research.

He said the NIH has spent \$546 million on embryonic stem cell research "and phenomenal progress has already been made." The story goes on to question whether lawmakers have the time or political will to take on the controversial topic. Unless they do, funding for human embryonic stem cell research at the federal level will remain uncertain.

The New York Times quotes DeGette as saying:

“ "I've been inundated with calls from freshman and other vulnerable members saying it's not only the right issue to work on, but will also be politically good for them."

A.A.

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